

# The World of Foreign Books

Surveyed by A. G. H. SPIERS.

Edmond Jaloux and the Art Novel.

DIFFERENCES in opinion between those belonging to the older and younger generations is nowhere more keen than in France. Thus, it is a rare author who, though still comparatively young, can get support from a reasonable number of both his seniors and his contemporaries. The writer of "Les Profondeurs de la Mer," now 44 years old, Edmond Jaloux, has some fifteen volumes to his credit. "Les Sangsues," one of the earliest (1904), is still considered with much favor in France. His "Le Reste est Silence" (1909), which won the *Vie Heureuse* prize, was the author's real introduction to popular favor. In 1918 he brought out "L'Incertaine," and two years later "Au-dessus de la Ville." His recognition as one of the more unusually talented writers of France dates from this latter year. He was awarded the *Grand Prix de Littérature* for 1920. The younger reviews naturally devoted much space to this event, and the venerable *Revue des deux Mondes* published a careful study of his works from the pen of Andre Beaunier. If taken literally, "Les Profondeurs de la Mer" would prove disagreeable reading.

Taken as an art expression of a fundamental truth about life, it is quite the opposite. It has a decided power to hold the attention and to amuse the aesthetic taste. Literally, the story Jaloux tells is that of a man who, having married one wife and been untrue to her, marries another with the same results, incidentally causing the death of two other women and behaving as a most irresponsible father for a tubercular boy. Fortunately, the very baldness of this literal aspect, its uncompromising outline and the evident artificiality of its arrangement save us from any mistake. They warn us that we are dealing with symbols rather than phenomena, with means of expression rather than with the portrayal of what the author would have us accept as real happenings. It is with this literal story as with the descriptions of natural scenery of which I quote two sample passages. The first is a description of sunset:

"I pointed out to her, under an arch of incandescent clouds and beyond a stairway of green, the descent of celestial fruit into the basket of the sea. Out of the flaming horizon came

a majestic persuasion to calm and resignation. And even here under the trees every leaf stopped its rustling and every bird its song. . . . A moment of silence resembling the interruptions, the sudden pauses, in the rattle and breathing of a dying man, the minute when night in its torpor disappears in the abyss."

The second description is that of a water spout:

"Something on the horizon joined the heavens to the sea, a black spiral which seemed to twist with extreme rapidity, comparatively thin at the middle and broadening out at the two extremities, where it ended in two vacuum cups, of which one sucked in the cloud, while the other drew up the water. Flashes of lightning ceaselessly leaped out from this turning column."

These "vacuum cups," this "death rattle," this "fruit" in the "basket of the sea" are the images and comparisons of one who holds himself in an attitude of detachment. Between the original studied and the picture drawn, stretches a long interval wherein are working the mind and imagination of an author prone to simplify, to intensify, to concretize, to give, in short, all that which we commonly mean by a highly developed "style."

A friend of Jaloux once wrote of him: "In the midst of Chinese lacquers, of Venetian furniture . . . of handsome books

. . . two Angora cats, birds from the Aegean Islands, he leads a pleasant life of study." These are just the tastes we might expect of the author of "L'Incertaine," of "Au-dessus de la Ville" and "Les Profondeurs de la Mer." Whatever his subject, his expression is dominated by a steady and highly particular art sense, which nothing can put to rout. Whether Jaloux be working in the realm of the moral or that of the physical, no emotion is such as to check its action. In the middle of an intense scene, at a moment when the narrator's wife accuses him of caring for another woman, he nevertheless succeeds in finding a comparison characteristically concrete and by no means obvious: "So far the words of Huguette, I must confess it, slid off me like bullets on the hide of a rhinoceros."

One of the most striking passages of "L'Incertaine," a passage which sticks in the memory, is the description of a night: "A broad moonlight drinks in the garden and fills it with the weirdest of shadows. The very material of the night is, so it seems, spun by some spider from another planet. Every thread shimmers and slips and vibrates with the air of silk, rose work and intercrossed designs on all sides. Moonlight so magical, so splendid that its radiance is dense and fills all space; this intangible veil seems, nevertheless, capable of being touched, like the skin of the jelly-fish or the embossing of hoarfrost. In this unbroken shimmering the world becomes the work of a master glassmaker, blowing with his long pipe the caprice of a Chinese poet." There is something of this "Chinese poet" in Jaloux and of the Chinese artist in general, the painter and the potter of centuries ago.

The subject of "Les Profondeurs de la Mer" is a man, or a type of man. Claude Lothaire is eager, turbulent, passionate, appealed to by all sorts of things, always impatient and always filled with desire. Possessed of personal charm and literary talent, he is constantly in quest of new emotional excitement. As a result of this temperament he indirectly causes the death of the woman in whom he sees, when more than 40 years of age, his last chance for happiness, for that mirage, that stimulation of his energy and imagination which represents real living in his eyes. As the result of this death he undergoes a change and understands, as he himself explains, another attitude toward life. In the last pages of the volume he says: "Between the ages of 12 and 20 man fixes his own fate through the confused desires of his adolescence; he imagines what he will become; at that age I could not understand that there existed in life anything but love, reputation and ambition. And until yesterday the whole object of my life was to carry out . . . these dreams of a youth. They have followed me all my life. I have not yet been a man; I have been the projection of a still half childish mind. And now as I reach my maturity I see there is something else to look for. . . . To-day I begin to see that . . . everything is much simpler than that. Yes. . . . to-day I need but to know that I exist for my heart to be full of gratitude. I am satisfied to love, to understand this body of sacred laws and mysterious phenomena called life."

Such is the main figure of "Les Profondeurs de la Mer." Everything else that appears in this book, the secondary figures and even the physical setting of the action, including the weather, are created and treated with only one end in view: to set off and explain this main figure. Claude's young son Jack reflecting very much his father's feelings throws into relief the immature character of the urge that drives Claude ahead. As a contrast to the frenzy of Claude, the slave of the desire to be active and to possess, Jaloux introduces David Grove, the sad eyed disciple of the Hindus, who aspires to Nirvana, who desires nothing but rest and is ready to give up everything, even his wife Gwendolyn. The ruthless egoism of Claude's behavior, its evil influence, is depicted in a quartet of women, each representing a different aspect: his first wife (that is, she who has been possessed and forgotten); his present wife (she whom Claude is now forgetting); Gwendolyn (she whom he desires); and Jeanne Issaura (a woman who loves him, but whom he has never loved). These, with the exception of three or four persons who appear only for a moment, are the only characters in the book and yet they have no independent existence of their own, being solely determined by the requirements of the main figure.

## The Right To-day Not to Work

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laws, the joker in the act is the attempt to make the act of striking not illegal in itself, but illegal as a "conspiracy," and everybody knows that a real strike can only be brought about by previous general understanding.

The Kansas act is primarily intended to make the act of striking a punishable offense. Gov. Allen and the other defenders of that act insist that the statute does not forbid anybody to leave his work; but it does forbid any number of persons above one from leaving at the same time by a joint understanding, and without that feature the law would break down.

The Kansas law, however, does not apply to all strikes but only to strikes in industries which are impressed or affected by the public interest. This goes far beyond any national action on the same subject. Everybody recognizes that transportation is a public interest which is regulated by both State and nation, even to the point of fixing wage scales, and yet there is nothing in any statute of the United States which prevents or provides punishment for a strike of railroad employees. The coal industry is certainly impressed with the public interest, but after months of an almost watertight strike of anthracite miners they went back to work practically on their own terms.

Having put into effect this formidable statute the Kansas courts hesitate to use its row of practicable legal teeth. They are resorting to another weapon against strikes and labor unions—namely, the injunction. It is a very curious fact that in the case of Howat, a labor leader in the coal industry, and in several other cases the conviction was obtained not at all under the conspiracy sections of the act but for contempt of court in continuing to direct a strike. That is, in a very hot and difficult case, the State of Kansas has declined to use the machinery created by the statute of 1920 and has fallen back on court action, which apparently could have been taken without that statute.

An effort was made in March, 1922, to annul the conviction in the Howat case by appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States. The court, with one dissent, showed a serious lack of respect for what they termed "the board mis-called a court . . . an administrative tribunal to arbitrate controversies between employers and employees." As a matter of fact the Kansas courts seem to recognize the Industrial Court as a fifth wheel to the judicial coach—as a commission and not an integral part of the courts.

A pamphlet issued by Gov. Allen September 20, 1922, sets forth that in about two years the "court passed on thirty-four cases; part of the cases were brought by the employees; and in thirty-three cases both parties were satisfied with the finding. Of course it will be noted that these cases do not include the conviction and imprisonment of Howat, which was anything but

satisfactory to labor—or any other serious strike.

The two main reasons for setting up this unusual tribunal were that coal and transportation were so essential to the life of the community that an unusual and precedent breaking method was called for, and that the court was to act as an arbitral body between employers and employees. The net effect, however, was that workmen in the specified industries were held to a specific performance of their labor contract. Or, to restate the issue, having entered the employment of certain corporations they were deprived of the privilege to strike, a method practiced in the United States perhaps a thousand times a year, and the only kind of leaving off work that would affect the employer's mind.

What was the penalty? The statute makes a strike punishable by imprisonment; that is, for probably the first time in its history, the State of Kansas has undertaken to punish two or more men who agree, together not to give specific performance of a labor contract.

Furthermore the decision of the court is binding on both employers and employees, and is enforceable by fining or imprisonment or both. This is a unilateral penalty, for it is very hard to imprison a corporation and very easy to imprison individuals. It does not appear that any penalty that hurts has been laid on employers, whereas there have been severe penalties against the striker.

The whole system has been reinforced by a method which the State authorities have ignored. Observers on the spot, however, testify that the local governments were encouraged and incited to haul up as vagrants striking miners who had money to live on—presumably their savings and strike funds—and send them to prison on the ground that they refused to work. This abominable and essentially untruthful course might logically extend to any individual who left employment and did not find or seek another job, even though he was not charged with conspiracy.

The trouble with the Kansas method and with the injunction method and with the compulsory arbitration method is that they all depend for their success on prosecuting, convicting and imprisoning men whose real transgression is that they refuse to work on terms acceptable to the employers. Can any means be found to meet that difficulty?

One means undoubtedly is to give aid and protection to non-strikers who are willing to take the jobs. It is very doubtful whether mining, for instance, is really so highly skilled that a new staff of green men could not learn the trade in six months. Conducting and braking also are not very technical; but if all the locomotive engineers and firemen should strike where would the food supply for our cities be?

Are these difficulties a reason for reversing the general trend of decisions for a hundred years to the effect that a peaceful strike is not unlawful? Would the coun-

try be happier if other States and the Union should adopt the ultra methods described by Gov. Allen? He says that "The Industrial Court notified the law officers of all the communities which have railway shops that there was no such thing in Kansas as peaceful picketing."

Or shall we adopt as a national system the construction of the Kansas law under which Gov. Allen is now backing the prosecution of his lifelong bosom friend, William Allen White, for putting a card in his window expressing sympathy with the strikers? "This card," says the Governor, "concerning its general use, innocent in its declaration of 100 per cent. sympathy for the strikers, was much more serious than an expression of sympathy, since its effect was to create an atmosphere of hostility against the men who would be obliged to come to these stores to buy their living supplies."

The Kansas law and all other similar devices for compelling men who fundamentally disagree to agree to agree are subject to two fatal objections. The first is that personal liberty is too important to permit its usual guaranties to be destroyed by inventing a new kind of conspiracy, by backing up the recent penal laws, already extreme, by technical court injunctions, by encouraging or permitting local governments to practice false imprisonment on strikers and by trying to silence third parties quite outside the controversy who venture to assert that the strikers have right on their side. That is too big a price to pay for what is substantially no result at all, for all this combination of penalties does not obviate the fact that at this moment there is an unsolved strike in Kansas.

The other reason for avoiding such extreme and footless measures is that it is playing the game of the other side. To attempt to extirpate the strikes and to annihilate the labor unions, while there is no limit on the number of employers' unions, is futile. Violent legal measures which are contrary to the received law of the last three-quarters of a century are the same kind of remedy as the violence of the strikers, though put in action by the friends and defendants of law and order.

If it should ever come to push of pike the employees are far more numerous than the employers or the employing class. Intimidation and brute force outside of or in strikes are contrary to law and should be dealt with by legal process. The truth is that these roundabout courts and the whole system of injunction are used simply because of the fear that juries will not sustain convictions for personal violence; the same defense is sometimes put forward for lynchings. If the national and State governments will stick to normal legal peaceful methods they can put ordinary strikers in the wrong and violent strikers in the penitentiary. To adopt their methods is to make law and justice cross over and occupy the offender's goal line.